



Latrobe Valley Naturalist

May - June 2016

Issue No. 584

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General meetings

Held at 7:30 pm on the
fourth Friday of each month
at the Newborough Uniting
Church, Old Sale Road
Newborough VIC 3825



Flowers of an ancient Weeping Pittosporum *Pittosporum phylliraeoides* observed on private property near Lake Gil Gil during the SEANA Spring Camp at Donald (Photo: Phil Rayment).

Upcoming events

May general meeting: Friday 27 May – 'South Africa Trip' – David Mules & Ken Harris

Excursion: Saturday 28 May – Fungi foray at Duff Sawmill Track. Meet 9.30am at Traralgon South Hall carpark.

Botany Group: Saturday 4 June – Looking at fern reproductive organs under microscope. Meet 10am at Jackie Tims' place, Yarragon South.

Bird Group: Tuesday 7 June – Moe Wastewater Treatment ponds. Please advise Alix if attending. Meet on site 9.30am.

June general meeting: Friday 24 June – 'Celia Rosser, Banksia Lady' – Carolyn Landon will speak about her book on the botanical artist.

Excursion: Saturday 25 June – Celia Rosser Gallery at Fish Creek and Rail Trail walk. Meet 10am at the gallery.

Botany Group: Saturday 2 July – Origins of plant names. Meet 10am at Estelle & Bruce's place, Traralgon.

Bird Group: Tuesday 5 July – Blue Rock Dam. Meet onsite 9.30am.

President's Report 2015-16

The President's Report allows me to reflect on our achievements in the past year and look forward to what we can expect in the coming year. There are now many more activities that members can become involved in. Our botany group and birding group visit a number of interesting sites and meet monthly. There are also some more specialised natural history excursions such as mothing evenings and owling evenings, which are more ad hoc and seasonal. We will also be announcing a photographic competition that will occur during this term, with judging taking place in February 2017. There will be a display of the winning entries to coincide with a SEANA camp that our Club will be co-hosting with the Sale Field Naturalists Club on 17-21 March 2017.

I was surprised when somebody told me we now had 115 members and it is very pleasing and encouraging to see our membership expanding. It is also pleasing to see that we are attracting many younger members when there are so many other options for younger people to become involved with.

One of the contributing factors in our success is the hard work put in by our committee members and I would like to thank members who have accepted positions on the committee for a further two-year term. I was particularly pleased that Rose accepted the position of assistant secretary, a position that had been vacant for a number of years.

However, your committee is going through a period of change and transition. The committee has enjoyed an extensive period of stability which has lasted for several decades. Last year Gill announced that she wished to retire from her position as the editor of our magazine – a position she had held for 22 years. We were very fortunate that Tamara stepped into that role and has fundamentally changed the appearance of the magazine. At our AGM this year, Wendy agreed to accept the nomination as secretary for a further two-year term but this will be her last term. Wendy has occupied this position since 1993 and so will have served 25 years at the end of her term. It is a very demanding role and Wendy has offered her assistance and support to the person who will take on that position in the future. I feel confident that Wendy will remain an active member of our committee after her retirement. These are symptoms of an ageing committee and one that needs new members to attend our business meetings.

The Club is now in a stronger financial position following funding of \$2,500 from our contribution to the Red Gum Grassy Plains project. The project involved a number of bird and plant surveys in some red gum grassy woodland sites that had been identified by the Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network. I would like to thank members for their contribution in conducting these surveys. The Club also received over \$1,000 for the sale of a number of bird calendars assembled by the Lions Club in Traralgon and again I would like to thank all the contributors, and Alix for initiating and organising the calendar.

We had a stronger focus on conservation topics at our general meeting nights. Matt Bowler gave a talk on the work he had done on restoring the meanders in the lower Latrobe River, Mary Cole gave a presentation on fungi and the role they play in carbon management. Both these talks were followed by related excursions the following day. Richard Loyn gave a presentation on the impacts of fire on flora and fauna and Duncan Malcolm gave a talk on the Wild Horse Management Plan from his position as chair of the management committee.

It is always interesting to hear other members' experiences of natural history in more remote places and this year we had a talk on Peter Ware's visit to Gluepot Reserve and my visit to Chatham Islands. Both these talks focused on birds, but mammals were presented with a talk on the genetics of the Strzelecki koala by Wendy Wright, and entomology was discussed by Reiner Richter in his talk on dragonflies and damselflies in February, followed by a related excursion to the Traralgon

Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve. One of the highlights of the year was the talk on the life of Jean Galbraith by her biographer, Meredith Fletcher.

We continued to visit a number of our local reserves which included Morwell National Park, Edward Hunter Reserve, Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve, Tyers Park and Mullungdung State Forest. Some of our excursions were a little further out, but still popular places to visit, including Sale Wetlands and our annual wildflower walk to Mount St Gwinear with the Friends of Baw Baw National Park. Other less visited sites included Beech Gully at Mt Erica and Nangara Reserve at Jindivick.

Our two weekend camps this year gave us the opportunity to go a little further. Our spring camp was held at the Warby Ranges and our summer camp was held at Mt Baw Baw Ski Resort.

I would like to thank all the Club and committee members for their continued support throughout the year and look forward to the incoming year which promises to be an interesting and exciting one.

David Stickney

SEANA Spring Camp at Donald – September 2015

The last weekend of September saw close to one hundred field naturalists converge on Donald, in Victoria's Wimmera, for the Spring 2015 SEANA Camp. Ken Harris, Wendy and Ken Savage, Gill Bremner and I represented our club at a really well-organised event, a credit to our hosts, the Donald History and Natural History Group. It was great, too, to see several organisations from the small cohesive Donald community work so well together. The base venue for evening talks, meetings and meals was the function room at the Donald Racecourse.

Since European settlement, the vast Wimmera region has been extensively cleared for agricultural pursuits, with only tiny remnant vegetation patches remaining in the general vicinity of Donald. Thus a focus of the camp was on the important efforts of the DHNHG and like-minded individuals to reserve and revegetate some of these sites. Climate trends form an additional challenge here, with the area currently experiencing a second year of low spring rainfall and an exceptionally dry 2015 to date.

Friday evening talk – Ian Morgan

Following welcomes from DHNHG President Norm Hollis and SEANA President Deborah Evans, our guest speaker Ian Morgan, co-author of the recently published *Birds of the Wimmera* and dedicated bird photographer, was introduced. Defining the Wimmera as the region from St Arnaud to the Victorian/South Australian border and from the northern Grampians in the south to the southern edge of Wyperfeld NP, he noted that approx. 250 of Australia's recorded bird species are to be found there, reflecting its great habitat variety, with Box-Ironbark forests around St Arnaud, Red Gum woodlands and lakes that support waders when holding water. Ian's superb photos covered many of the species plus just a few Mallee birds. Some examples: Brown Quail, Red-capped Robin, Blue-winged Parrot and Banded Stilt (found in great numbers when the lakes hold water).

Saturday evening talk – Anne Hughes

Anne Hughes, President of the St Arnaud FNC, spoke on the subject of orchids, with her engaging

title being “Sex, Lies and Captive Ladies”. She noted that, in her region, various species of Spider, Leek, Greenhood and Sun orchids are all threatened. Swamp Wallabies graze on native orchids, unfortunately, yet orchid survival requires fungal associations which are specific to each orchid species and the wallabies have an important role in spatially distributing these fungi by eating them. On top of that, fuel reduction burns are increasing the threat by destroying wallaby habitat.



Scented Sun-orchid (Photo: Phil Rayment)

Saturday excursion to Mount Jeffcott Flora and Fauna Reserve and The Range

Mount Jeffcott is an outcrop of very hard bedded rock with an ascribed age of 500 million years, forming a “hill” and a “range”. The hill rises to 262m above sea-level and 140m above the surrounding plains, north-east of Donald. For much of the twentieth century, the mount was regularly grazed from adjoining selections so that little of its original vegetation survived. Following pressure from the DHNHG and others, the site was gazetted as a flora reserve in 1972, consisting of two sections, 160 acres around Mt Jeffcott and 460 acres known as The Range, with an intervening strip of freehold land. Now managed by Parks Victoria, our leader David Falla, a local landholder, explained that the regeneration of native flora has been impressive.



A prostrate Eutaxia (Photo: Phil Rayment)

Our 1km walk to the summit took us among Drooping She-oak *Allocasuarina stricta* (at the northern limit of its range), various eucalypts (the Mt Jeffcott Mallee-box *E. filiformis* is listed as ‘endangered’), the occasional White Cypress Pine *Callitris preissii* and Cherry Ballart *Exocarpus cupressiformis*. Colourful carpets of the golden blooms of the Hoary Sunray *Leucochrysum albicans* clothed the slopes. The Annual Rock Fern *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia* was prevalent, and orchids in flower included Golden Moths *Diuris pedunculata* and Scented Sun-orchid *Thelymitra longifolia*.

Our vehicle-based circuit of The Range in the afternoon took us through a variety of habitats. Plants of interest included Hooked Needlewood *H. tephrosperma* (the district’s only Hakea), a prostrate Eutaxia and *Pomaderris paniculosa*.

Sunday morning excursion to remnant vegetation sites in Lake Gil Gil area

This excursion took participants to two adjoining blocks of remnant native vegetation which are being protected and managed by farmers Clive Barrance and Dennis Baker respectively. Eleven hectares on one block has been placed under a Trust for Nature covenant and has had no stock on it for 20 years; the other block includes 10 hectares fenced off under a Stewardship Agreement. Of interest were an ancient Weeping Pittosporum *P. phylliraeoides* (sheltered by a Black Box *Eucalyptus largiflorens*), an Umbrella Wattle *Acacia oswaldii*, a Variable Sida *Sida corrugata* and a Fuzzy New Holland Daisy *Vittadinia cuneata*.

I've looked above at just two of the excursions in a varied program which concluded with a pleasant barbecue lunch to fortify us for the long drive home.

Philip Rayment

Scorpion *Urodacus* sp. seen at Mt Jephcott (Photo: Phil Rayment)



Fire, flora and fauna – Can we live safely and preserve biodiversity at the same time?

Richard Loyn opened his presentation by taking us back to the events of the Black Saturday bush fire. He noted how forests surprisingly survive bushfires, including at times Mountain Ash forest, which he has seen regenerating beyond expectation. However, in general, mixed forests are more adaptable to fires. Hence, the architecture of the forest is somewhat preserved even in cases of extreme fire such as on Black Saturday.

Richard and his colleague Ed McNabb have done several retrospective studies of fires around Victoria but this presentation focused on the Bunyip State Park and the Goulburn-Broken catchment. The scope of the survey prior to the fires was as follows:

- 140 sites (70 in each region)
- Half in each region burned in Feb 2009
- Previously surveyed for owls & arboreal mammals pre-drought (1996-2004) and again in 2009-11 using owl call playback and spotlighting
- Diurnal birds also surveyed 2009-11, 10-minute searches for each 1 ha.

The time span of the survey gave Richard and his team an opportunity to assess the effect of both drought and fire on birds and mammals. The scope of the research did not cover flora.

Richard showed a number of tables to demonstrate the effect of drought and fire, both of which appeared to reduce numbers of owls. However, Richard mentioned that taking into account birds' redistribution after the fire, it is difficult to accurately demonstrate whether it is drought or fire which is the prevalent factor. Some species such as the Koala appear to be particularly sensitive. Richard noted that possums were hardly present in the forest after the fire whilst gliders appeared to have survived in greater numbers, perhaps because they do not rely as much on the shrub layers.

There was no survey of diurnal birds done prior to the fire, so Richard presented data from a comparative survey of the burnt and unburnt sites during the winter and spring immediately following the fires. Forest birds became much less common in burnt areas but there was some redistribution between winter and spring.

In the spring of 2009, Richard and Ed recorded an influx of White-browed and Masked Woodswallows, birds not usually found in this part of Victoria. These nomadic birds took advantage of the food available in the burnt forest, bred and moved on.

Another notable change was the influx of the Scarlet Honeyeater moving into the area from East

Gippsland in the summer of 2009; they fed mostly on the box mistletoe in unburnt parts of the forest. A number of birds favoured the burnt area: Spotted Pardalote, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Scarlet and Flame Robins and Rosellas. Others such as Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Striated and Brown Thornbills favoured the unburnt areas. Richard showed the situation in East Gippsland after the 1983 fires and a similar pattern could be observed in the two areas under discussion. Some birds favoured the burnt areas whilst other simply disappeared for a period.

Richard also presented some data concerning the experimental fuel reduction burns in Wombat State Forest from 1984, with five replicated blocks of five treatments (frequent or infrequent burning in spring or autumn, with unburnt controls). A recent snapshot survey showed that these cool burns in either season have only a small effect on forest birds. This seems to indicate that it is legitimate to undertake control burning in either season. The important rule would be not to burn everywhere in the same pattern.

Research implications:

- Local studies best, especially when fire characteristics can be quantified
- Most obvious effects 0-3 years after fire
- There is a need to quantify longer-term effects over broad regions.
- Habitat variables may explain more than just time since fire
- Planners need info on time since fire or fire frequency
- Satellite imagery may help (future & historical)

Richard concluded that whilst the ecology of the forests appears to be resilient, there are "adverse consequences" from too frequent burns. Specific management principles should be applied to specific forest systems rather than an overall model such as the 5% burn rule. Richard also noted that insufficient attention was paid to forest habitat such as hollows.

Joelle Champert

Victorian Alps Wild Horse Management Plan

Duncan Malcolm was the chair of a Roundtable Group to assist Parks Victoria with the development of a Wild Horse Management Plan for the Victorian Alps, and at our November meeting he detailed the process and recommendations made by the group. He provided me with the notes from this talk, and I have summarised them below.

Wild horses have been present in the alpine areas of Victoria and NSW for almost 200 years. The original herd probably originated from a mob released by a Police Sergeant Brumby prior to his departure to Tasmania, hence the term 'Brumbies'. However, since that time there have probably been other additions and with the relative lack of fencing both past and present, there has been plenty of opportunity for interbreeding, both opportunistic and contrived.

Although some of the uses we put horses to may have changed over the past 200 years since their introduction to the high country, they still hold a place in our consciousness. If anything, we may have a more romantic view of this domestic and recreational animal species than we held in the past.

Now let us look at their high country habitat and reflect on the changes, both physical and attitudinal, that may have taken place there over the same 200 years.



Wild horses at Native Dog Flat in November 2013 (Photo: Ken Harris)

Victoria has had over 70% of its natural vegetation cleared compared to the estate that existed prior to white settlement. Of the remaining 30%, around half consists of largely forested areas such as the eastern alpine region or high country in Gippsland and north-eastern Victoria, in the Otways Ranges in the south-west, in the Big and Little Deserts in the Mallee region, along the Murray and its lower tributaries, at Wilsons Promontory, parts of the Strzelecki Ranges, the Dandenongs, etc.

Of the other half, which we class as scattered remnants, around 50% is on freehold land and a great deal of the rest

on public land is on roadside reserves and other Crown easements. It is estimated that the once prolific areas of native grasses may be down to as low as 3% of its former coverage in the face of cropping, improved pasture practices and intensive animal grazing practices.

Much of the reduction in forested areas can be attributed to clearing for agrarian purposes such as in the Mallee and Wimmera regions (cropping and grazing) South Gippsland (grazing and dairying) and the Koo Wee Rup Swamp (dairying, grazing, horticulture). Add in urbanisation and what we view as normal in our landscape is nothing like the vistas that greeted the early explorers and settlers.

There have always been people such as yourselves with an interest in, and an appreciation of, the natural environment. However, our major efforts to protect areas for posterity, for scientific study and for biodiversity have been relatively recent. There are exceptions of course, as the beautiful and much-loved Wilsons Promontory was temporarily preserved as national park in 1898 and permanently so in 1908.

The real change in more modern times came with the formation of the Land Conservation Council (LCC) in 1971 following a political furore over proposals to clear more of the Little Desert in the Mallee. Let's not forget that at that time farmers were still being granted Crown leases for eventual purchase, contingent on their capacity to clear specified amounts of land. There were tax breaks for clearing and improving country. The Closer Settlement Commission was still opening up parts of Victoria like Simpson and Heytesbury in the south-west and Yanakie near the Prom. We believed we still had plenty of natural habitat to spare. In the meantime, grazing of late spring, summer and autumn pastures in the more accessible areas of the high country, and in smaller areas like the Barmah Forest in northern Victoria, had developed into strong culture showing good returns for those used to this lifestyle and business management.

During the next 40 years following the Bolte Government formation of the LCC, successive Victorian state governments saw fit to use this, and successor bodies the Environment Conservation Council and the Victorian Environment Assessment Council, as a way of bringing protection to that part of the natural environment situated on public land. There was also a subtle but real change in the way we started as a wider community to view our public estate. Our values and our perceptions were changing. We were starting to get serious about valuing and protecting our natural habitats and, even in some seats, electing politicians to bring about change.

One more part of the scene-setting for the Wild Horse Roundtable initiative is animal welfare. The formation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals occurred in Victoria in 1871

and since that time the power and funding available for animal welfare initiatives and penalties for cruelty to animals has progressively ramped up. Through international organisations such as PETA, high profile stars and celebrities advocate on behalf of animals in rich and sometimes not so rich societies. Modern media provides a convenient platform for their views and in this country at least, with an increasingly urbanised society still largely dependent on and attracted to meat, eggs and dairy as its main source of protein, many people are largely ignorant of the realities and practices that put these consumables on their tables.

In the three years before the Roundtable Group first met late in 2012, cattle had been removed from the high country and although there were still political skirmishes happening around this policy, most had gone and recovery of some heavily-grazed areas was becoming evident.

With most cattle removed, focus had switched to horse numbers, especially in the eastern end and in country bordering the NSW border where managers in that state were attempting to reduce herd numbers in the Kosciuszko National Park. Some estimates put numbers in the eastern ranges as high as 8-10,000 with only around 50-70 in the Bogong Plains area. Calculating numbers of horses in this sort of terrain is quite difficult and various information sources including parks managers, horse ropers, trappers and visual observation by helicopter provided data. It was also believed that the herd was going through one of its periodic breeding booms due to improved conditions following on from the dry years of 2000-7. Some estimates put these increases at around 20% annually.

The Roundtable members represented an interesting mix – 8 people apart from me, one from each of the following:

- The Alpine Brumby Management Association – horse ropers and trappers sometimes contracted by Parks Vic.
- The Australian Trail Horse Riding Association
- The Friends of the Cobberas
- The High Country Tourism
- The Mountain Cattleman's Association of Victoria
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Victoria)
- The Victorian Brumby Association – a group that tames and rehomes some captured brumbies.
- The Victorian National Parks Association

One could have assumed that chairing this group may have made the proverbial herding of cats look easy, but in actual fact, most times, most of the members were well-behaved, despite the obviously passionate views held. We had agreed that we would operate on the basis of consensus for decisions encapsulating our recommendations. However, this was a group reporting to, and making recommendations to, Parks Victoria and whilst it was understood that these would carry weight, they would not necessarily be agreed to in their entirety...

Our first meeting was in Omeo, with a meet-and-greet dinner, an overnight stay, a preliminary meeting next morning to clarify our terms of reference and establish meeting protocols and then later a field trip out the Cobberas and the Playground to see onsite impacts, with comparisons of fenced-off and protected areas compared with unprotected areas. We were also able to view photographic material taken at other sites.

One of the major causes for concern regarding damage from horses or cattle is the impact of their hard hooves on sensitive areas at the head of small streams and in bogs. The sphagnum moss in these spots acts like a giant sponge, moderating extreme rainfall events, minimising headwater erosion (very important), and facilitating slow release of water to maintain small streams and, at the same time, minimise fire risk. So in a big fire event when these damp areas

are burnt, damage to the moss beds is minimal and recovery is quick.

We tend to see what we are used to and, in some instances, what we want to see. For instance when we viewed a site that had an unfenced and fenced-off area, some viewed the short, green pasture with smatterings of clover as a healthy piece of vegetation and good horse feed. Others recognised the reedy, wetter, fenced-off areas for what they were – healthy, undamaged examples of what should be there.

This tour, and a later one where we overnighted at Falls Creek and viewed parts of Bogong, were invaluable for us to understand the issues and the terrain.

That first meeting enabled us to reach consensus on one point – but a very major point – that the horse, as an introduced species, can cause great damage to our high country environment. It also enabled us to reach consensus on another important principle: that if we were going to reduce environmental damage, then numbers would have to be reduced. This was one of the few times where we reached a consensus view, although we got close on a couple of other occasions.

Once you reach agreement that horse numbers need to be reduced, two fairly obvious questions become evident:

How many will we need to remove? And how will that happen? Let's deal with the first one. It involved a discussion in two parts:

Should we get rid of them all, and could we? If not all, what would be a desirable and practical number?

It was agreed that we could theoretically get rid of all the horses in the Bogong area because there were only 50-70 there and the terrain is less challenging. In fact, for a short time we got agreement that we should, but at the next meeting one reneged and one wavered – consensus not achieved.

There was pretty much universal agreement that even if we wanted to get rid of all the horses in the eastern part of the study area, this was most likely Mission Impossible. Not only were we dealing with huge numbers in very different terrain, but there is the boundary issue between NSW and ourselves and it is well recognised that when numbers are light in the north, they head north, light in the south and they head south.

It seemed that given the numbers present – at that stage estimated at 8-10,000 – that we could reasonably aspire to a base of between 1500-2,000 to start with. So the next question: over what period of time should this be achieved? Bear in mind that with recruitment levels from breeding estimated at near 1500 per year, if you are not culling at least that many, then no progress is being made. This is where baseline figures become very important. More recent modelling seems to be leaning towards a smaller herd size, maybe 5-6000. Even so, if net increases from breeding are only running at 15% there is potentially 750-900 added each year and that means a cull of at least 1000 per year to make modest progress towards our target numbers.

Which brings us back to that other simple question: how will it happen? At present there are two main methods employed: trapping and catching (roping).

Trapping involves skilled operators using portable yards. After a while, horses become wary or most of the mob have been captured, so you have to move on. Traps can only be set at suitable sites and with ready road access for trucks to take them to abattoirs or some to be rehomed. Most go to abattoirs and these are becoming few and far between. Catching involves a few very

skilled riders on very well-trained horses. It is risky to the catchers and dangerous for both the hunter and the hunted. The animal welfare people hate it. The bottom line is that between both methods there are around 300 horses per year captured and removed and it is very expensive.

What other methods are available? One day, contraception may be available but administering long acting drugs to a wild horse is tricky, and not practicable for now. Poisoning is possible, but there are too many risks. That leaves shooting... and by now the worms were pounding on the lid of the can and some had already escaped.

Horses are already shot illegally by rogue hunters and, anecdotally at least, probably always have been. There is little doubt that some mountain cattlemen culled them to keep numbers down and thereby reduce competition for feed for their livestock.

Once the Roundtable had come to the realisation that culling the numbers required couldn't be achieved with the current methods, we had to have the debate about shooting methods and carcass disposal. There was a reluctance to embrace shooting in any form, but at least some agreement was reached that skilled marks-people could deliver a headshot that would euthanase a horse relatively quickly and cleanly. Not so, said one member – a hunter – who said the only way was a gut shot through the heart with a big high-powered rifle. Then there was the question of aerial shooting and the animal welfare component became more than just a bit excitable. They needn't have stressed as the debate was already taking place in the wider community and government spokespeople were running a mile.

Whatever on-site method is used, there is always going to be risk and controversy, animal welfare issues and carcass disposal issues – whether via live transport to an abattoir, on-site processing, or rotting on the ground in the bush, providing more food for the ever-present wild dog population. At one level, our love and appreciation of horses makes it difficult to remove emotion from discussions like this; on the other hand, our inability to deal with this problem can present us with an even bigger one. During one discussion around the humane treatment of animals I asked the question, "What happens if numbers continue to grow, we get two or three dry years and horses starve to death?" The staggering response, "Well, that's just nature."

By now you may be asking yourself, "Did this mob reach any conclusions or make any recommendations at all?" The answer is "yes and no". They are still with the government and thus in reality considered draft."

A brief summary of some recommendations are as follows, and some are as outlined in the talk. The complete draft document can be read on the following link:

http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/620549/Roundtable-Group-Advice.pdf

Members agreed that to seek to minimise the adverse impacts of horses on the natural values of the high country, wild horse numbers need to be controlled as numbers are now such that the environment is threatened and the horses' own welfare may be compromised. Some members thought that it was important to retain the presence of wild horses (brumbies) in the high country, whereas others think it is important to remove wild horses, at least from the Alpine National Park. Not all methods of removal or control could be agreed on, but the key agreement was that it should be humane and practical, minimising transport and thus making euthanasia acceptable for animals captured in remote locations.

Having heard such an excellent account of the process that produced the draft report from 'the horse's mouth' so to speak, it will be interesting to see what is in the final management plan, whenever the government of the day decides it is politically acceptable to produce one.

Wendy Savage

Photo competition introductory notice

As part of the celebrations for our 50th Anniversary in 2010, the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club held a natural history photographic competition. It was very successful and we have decided to hold a second Nature Photography competition this year, with a public exhibition in early 2017 and a display of the best entries at the SEANA Autumn 2017 Camp in Sale.

Entries for the competition will not be accepted until 1st September 2016, but we are announcing it now, to encourage members to start thinking of the photos they take as possible competition entries and to start looking back at your existing photos for those extra special shots.

Entries will only be accepted from current members of the LVFNC and members of the Sale & District FNC. All submitted pictures must be taken in Australia, its territories or the surrounding oceans.

We are offering 10 sections and entrants may submit up to 2 pictures in each of the 10 sections, but we are limiting the total number of pictures from each entrant to 12.

The 10 sections are designated as:

- i Trees
- ii Flowering Shrubs
- iii Wildflowers (non-shrubby plants)
- iv Orchids
- v Ferns, Mosses and Liverworts
- vi Fungi (including Lichens and Slime Moulds)
- vii Birds
- viii Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Fish
- ix Insects, Spiders and other invertebrates
- x Landscapes and natural formations, including fire effects

We are not in a position to offer any prizes, but certificates will be awarded to the winners in each section and one picture will be selected as the overall winner. There will also be a “People's Choice” award from the public exhibition.

Timetable:

June 2016	Issue of entry forms
1 st September 2016	Start of entry period
30 th November 2016	Entries close
18 th February 2017	Judging and presentation of awards
18th-26th February 2017	Display in Traralgon
17th-20 th March 2017	Display at SEANA Camp in Sale

We have many photographers in the two Clubs and we look forward to seeing many beautiful photographs, so make a start at picking the best of your pictures and give some thought to those special pictures that you might take before the competition opens on 1st September.

Pictures will be submitted as prints and any size from 6” x 8” up to A4 8” x 12” will be accepted. We are also asking, where possible, for equivalent digital images to help us in putting together a show of the images.

Don't start sending any pictures yet – that doesn't happen until September 1st – but do start looking through your existing pictures and thinking about the beautiful images you may take before the competition gets started.

Ken Harris

REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING 18.04.2016

Finance

Cash Management Trading Account: \$6,555.76 Term Deposit: \$12,796.10

Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business

- Data projector: John Poppins has informed us that the model we purchased (Epson WUXGA EB-U32) has a PC-free option, which allows a USB stick to be plugged in directly so no laptop is needed. David will investigate it. Old data projector will be sold to David Stickney for \$50 as no other offers.
- Microscope: Input plug has been damaged and right eye-piece has condensation. David has sent it back to manufacturers in WA.
- Club Spring Camp at Otways 21-25 October: Accommodation expensive and some booked out. Will look in Apollo Bay area and consult Helen Langley from Timboon FNC about excursions. Julie suggested Apollo Bay Youth Hostel.
- November bus trip to French Island has been booked for \$140 fee plus \$100 bond to be paid.
- SEANA Autumn Camp 2017 at Sale: At April meeting the working party firmed up further on excursion and discussed probable costs and charges. Next meeting Wed 3 August.
- Club brochure for 2016: 100 copies have been printed, and are available at meetings, local libraries etc.
- Photographic competition planning: motion passed to display photos 18-26 Feb 2017 at Old Court House in Traralgon. This will cost around \$400 but have great public exposure.
- Rose Mildenhall will take on the role of secretary while Wendy is away during May, June and July. Ken Harris will chair May meetings while David Stickney is away.
- Business meeting venue: We will now be using the Moe Library meeting room for business meetings as there is no cost to do so.

Conservation matters

- Eric Lubcke Reserve: Received an email from Brett McGennissen outlining actions and plans re weed control. Will reply welcoming the planned actions and will plan a visit in the spring.
- Suzy Zent has contacted Phil and David Stickney regarding 3 matters, which they will continue to liaise with her about:
 - Invitation to conduct Strzelecki koala surveys on private land, poster to be displayed at Fed Uni
 - HVP have applied to harvest 20 old trees at Healey's Rd and Upper Middle Creek Rd
 - HVP will be handing back 2 blocks of the Cores & Links for reservation and there may be a management group which the club may like to be involved with.

**Please note that annual club membership fees were due on
1st March 2016.**

Guest speakers for May

David Mules & Ken Harris

Experienced Club members and photographers David Mules and Ken Harris will speak about their trip to South Africa in 2010. They spent four days of intense birdwatching around Cape Town and the West Coast National Park, and will show a variety of birds, mammals and also wildflowers.



Guest speaker for June

Carolyn Landon

Celia Rosser's banksia illustrations are considered amongst the best botanical works in the world. Her biographer, Carolyn Landon, will discuss Celia's emergence as an artist, how she coped with the unexpected fame, her influences, those she has influenced and how she has been recognised.



Latrobe Valley Naturalist is the official publication of the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalist Club Inc. The Club subscription includes the "Naturalist".

Brief contributions and short articles on any aspect of natural history are invited from members of all clubs. Articles, including those covering Club speakers and excursions, would typically be around one A4 side in length, should not exceed 1,000 words, and may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Photos should be sent as an attachment and be a maximum of 1 megabyte in size.

Responsibility for the accuracy of information and opinions expressed in this magazine rests with the author of the article.

Contributions should
be addressed to:

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Bank details for direct transfer: BSB 633000 A/c no. 145729844 – please remember to include identification.

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